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# **What's in a name?**

## **A boundary work analysis of the controversy over university homeopathy education**

**Dr Elizabeth Caldwell**

**University of Huddersfield**

Annual Meeting of the Society for Social Studies of Science (4S)

Boston, Massachusetts

August 30– September 2, 2017

# Overview

- Homeopathy in the UK
- The campaign against homeopathy degrees
- Boundary work in the campaign
- Implications for theory

# Homeopathy



Figure 1: Homeopathy Books (Nourished and Nurtured, 2015)



Figure 2: Homeopathic pharmacy (Homeobook.com, 2011)

# Homeopathy in the UK



Figure 3: The Prince of Wales with some homeopathic remedies in Poundbury, Dorset in 2004 (Daily Mail, 2004)



Figure 4: Royal London Homeopathic Hospital Sign (Morris, 2014)



# Lay homeopaths



Figure 5: Homeopathy consultation room (Restore Within, 2014).

UCAS

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university?

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## Sulphur



Keystone features:

- Excoriations(eczema)
- Hot, red itchy orifices
- Worse for scratching,washing and at night
- Untidy,hot selfish



Figure 6a: Want to go to university (Newrickstonesacademy, 2014); Figure 6b: University of Westminster (dcscience, 2008)  
Figure 6c: Uclan (Bizzeducation, 2017); Figure 6d: Sulphur slide (dcscience, 2010)





Homeopathy has  
changed little since the  
early nineteenth century.

# Science degrees without the science

Some UK universities offer science degrees in complementary medicine. David Colquhoun argues that these are not science but anti-science, and asks who is to blame.

Figure 7: Headline from David Colquhoun's Nature article (dcscience, 2007)



# Letter to the Times: March 2007

“Sir,

I'm not a doctor or a scientist, but I have had training in statistics. On balance I'm probably relieved that neither Cambridge nor Manchester, the universities I attended, are offering BSc degrees in homoeopathy; but, equally, I'm quite pleased that some universities are. Would it be OK if successful students were awarded a BA? ...

John Gibbon”

# Boundary Work

“Losers see their claims moved out from fact to illusion, lie, ulterior motive, or faith while they (and their methods, practices, organisations, and institutions) get marginalised or excluded fully from the domain of epistemic authority reserved for science and its genuinely licenced practitioners.”

(Gieryn, 1999, p.13)



Dear Economist how do I stop procrastinating? Matthew Engel the bookish brother of Hay-on-Wye Alan Beattie why the US prospered and Argentina didn't

## Mumbo-jumbo and barmpots: a glossary of *Magic Medicine*

➤➤**Homeopathy:** giving patients medicines that contain no medicine whatsoever.

➤➤**Herbal medicine:** giving patients an unknown dose of an ill-defined drug, of unknown effectiveness and unknown safety.

➤➤**Acupuncture:** a rather theatrical placebo, with no real therapeutic benefit in most, if not all, cases.

➤➤**Chiropractic:** an invention of a 19th-century salesman, based on nonsensical principles: shown to be no more effective than other manipulative therapies, but less safe.

➤➤**Reflexology:** plain old foot massage, overlaid with utter nonsense about non-existent connections between your feet and your thyroid gland.

➤➤**Nutritional therapy:** self-styled "nutritionists" making untrue claims about diet in order to sell you unnecessary supplements.

➤➤**Spiritual healing:** tea and sympathy, accompanied by arm-waving.

➤➤**Reiki:** ditto.

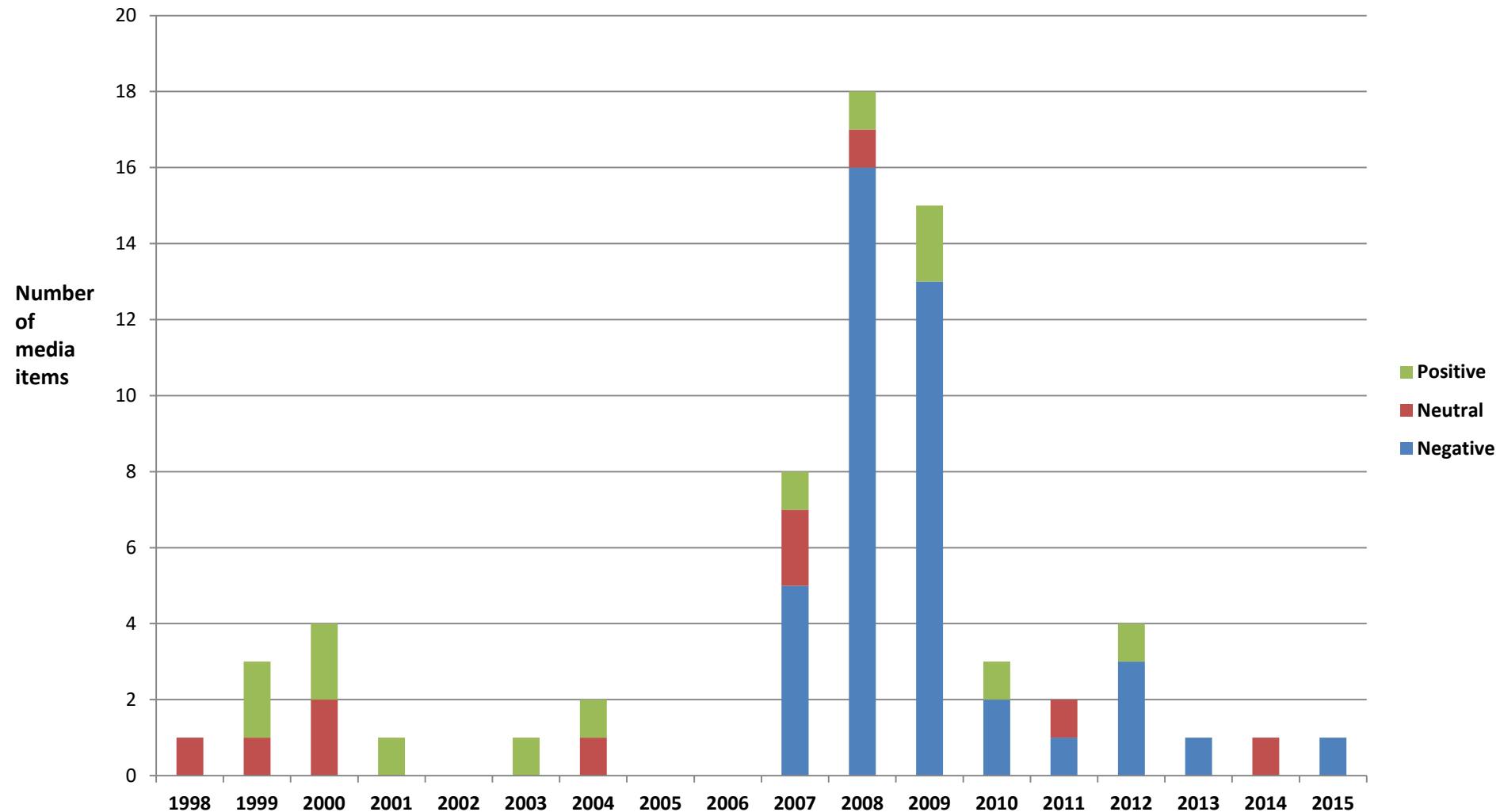
➤➤**Angelic reiki:** the same but with added

Figure 8 a: FT cover (dcscience, 2009a)

Figure 8b: Magic Medicine (dcscience, 2009b)



# Changes in media attitudes to homeopathy degrees over time (Caldwell, 2017)



# Media constructions of the boundary between science and homeopathy (Caldwell, 2017)

Science	Homeopathy (non science)
Motivated by pursuit of truth and knowledge	Motivated by profit
Based on logic and rationality	Based on magic and faith
Old, elite research universities	Newer universities, Mickey Mouse degrees

# Boundary work in the case of homeopathy degrees

- Expel homeopathy to protect science – from ‘diluting’, ‘undermining’ influences that don’t fit current conceptual and disciplinary structures
- Preserve autonomy from outside influence (government, fringe medical practitioners, popular opinion) as to what should be taught as science



# What does this tell us about medicine and science

- Shift in the discourse on CAM from therapeutic efficacy to therapeutic agents
- Scientists intervening in the affairs of another profession, namely medicine
- Medicine as an ally of science, must be protected by scientists



Homeopathic surgery

# Conclusions for boundary work theory

- Binary oppositions from almost any field can be used to illustrate the division between science and non-science.
- Cartographic lexicon of boundary work, of 'borders, territories, labeled landmarks, scale and coordinates' (Gieryn, 1999, p.29), must expand to include alliances and coalitions.

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